



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: annual progress report 2023 to 2024

Summary of progress made from April 2023 to March 2024.

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Introduction

This report focuses on progress the Welsh Government has made in the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and is aligned to the 6 objectives set out in the National Strategy on Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) 2022 to 2026.

Under section 12 of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act'), the Welsh Ministers must, in respect of each financial year, publish a report which addresses the following:

- progress made towards achieving the objectives in the Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence national strategy
- progress made towards achieving the purpose of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 in Wales (by reference to the national indicators)

The purpose of the Act is to improve:

- arrangements for the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- arrangements for the protection of victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- support for people affected by gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence

This report is structured in 3 parts.

- Part 1 sets out the wider context in Wales within which the progress against the objectives should be viewed, demonstrating progress towards achieving the purpose of the Act to prevent gender-based abuse and protect and support survivors. This includes sections on the VAWDASV Blueprint and

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National Indicators.

- Part 2 of the report focuses on each objective within the National Strategy in turn and includes an update on progress and next steps for each.
- Part 3 of the report focuses on specific consideration of equality and inclusion, intersectionality and vulnerable groups, and also wider engagement with the UK government and beyond.

Part 1: wider context

National strategy and VAWDASV Blueprint

The Welsh Government published its [VAWDASV National Strategy 2022 to 2026](#) in May 2022. The Welsh Government and Policing in Wales agreed to adopt a Blueprint approach to support delivery against the Strategy, which meant that devolved, non-devolved agencies, non-governmental organisations, specialist services and survivors could work together to coordinate actions and drive activities to deliver our shared priority of tackling VAWDASV.

Adopting this Blueprint approach has enabled the establishment of new shared [governance structure](#) reflecting the joint ownership of this shared priority, tackling VAWDASV. Adopting a Public Health approach to our work will ensure that we remain focused. The underlying principles that guide our collective efforts are:

- to challenge public attitudes
- to increase awareness in children
- increased accountability for those who perpetrate violence and abuse
- prioritise and focus on prevention
- confident and informed workforce
- provision of inclusive and accessible services that are trauma informed and needs led

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Welsh Government has published the VAWDASV **Blueprint high level plan** in March 2023 and then published a **progress report against the high-level actions** in October 2023.

The actions undertaken by the Blueprint workstreams have been incorporated into this Annual report for 2024 and will also be published as a progress report on the VAWDASV Blueprint pages, so that each Workstream is transparent on its progress since October 2023.

Survivor Voice: Scrutiny and Involvement Panel

We continue to work to ensure the voices and real-life experiences of survivors are at the heart of Welsh Government's work in this area. After a targeted recruitment focusing on existing survivor groups across Wales in early 2023, the panel has now appointed 9 survivors of different forms of violence against women, including domestic abuse and sexual violence. The panel met 10 times over the year. The plans and recommendations of the workstreams are scrutinised by the panel ahead of being submitted to the VAWDASV National Partnership Board. The panel is chaired by the National Advisers on gender-based abuse and draws much of its membership from existing, pre-established survivor groups across Wales. This creates a group that has links to and can feed into the existing networks and their memberships, creating a supportive, collaborative and sustainable structure.

National advisers

Johanna Robinson and Yasmin Khan are the National Advisers for Violence Against Women, Gender Based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence.

The National Advisers have published their **annual plan 2024 to 2025** which

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outlines how they will work to prevent VAWDASV and to protect and support people who have experienced violence and abuse.

National indicators

The first stage **VAWDASV National Indicators for Wales** were laid in the then National Assembly for Wales in June 2019. At the same time we also published the **National VAWDASV Indicators for Wales Technical Document**. The national indicators were intended to be the first stage indicators with further development work to take place during 2019 to 2020 with stakeholders to build upon the indicators, measures and data sources. This is in line with the provision set out in section 11(3) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 which gives Welsh Ministers the power to review and revise the indicators at any time. At the time the plan was to lay the final set of national indicators in spring 2020.

Under section (11)(1) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators (“national indicators”) that may be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the purpose of this Act (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the Senedd.

The 10 first stage national indicators are designed to measure progress towards the achievement of the 3 purposes of the Act as follows:

1. Increase in reporting of all forms of VAWDASV.
2. Increase in awareness across all sections of society that violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence is unacceptable.
3. Increase in awareness amongst children and young people in Wales of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships.
4. Increase in awareness amongst children and young people that abuse is always wrong.

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5. Increase in VAWDASV related incidents which result in an arrest, prosecution and conviction.
6. Perpetrators are able to receive appropriate intervention.
7. Enable equal access to and availability of effective, evidence based early interventions for victims and survivors.
8. Those in relevant job roles are trained to recognise and appropriately respond to VAWDASV.
9. Ensure victims receive appropriate support.
10. Increase victim confidence and access to justice.

Further development work

Following the laying of the first stage national indicators in June 2019, the work with key stakeholders and mapping of data sources was paused in 2020 due to the pandemic, and in 2021 as work commenced on the development and consultation of a new VAWDASV National Strategy 2022 to 2026 published in May 2022. Within that strategy we committed to a review of the national indicators to ensure they reflect the strategy and can be used to measure our progress in delivering our aims and objectives. The strategy recognised that in order to evaluate the impact of our strategy, it is important that we use measures which reflect our whole system approach and reflect the contribution of the full range of our partners.

In 2023 a Task and Finish group was established with Welsh Government policy teams, knowledge and analytical services and the National Adviser for VAWDASV to review the indicators adopted and the technical annex published in 2019. The review was undertaken with the acknowledgement that since the first stage national indicators were first laid before the Senedd we have developed and are delivering the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022 to 2026, the Blueprint approach and associated action plan, and the National Outcomes Framework for Wales (2022).

The conclusions of the Task and Finish group will be presented to the VAWDASV National Programme Board in December. Following this an update on the conclusions of the group and next steps will be published.

It is intended that any future consultation on the national indicators will feed into the review of the VAWDASV National Strategy 2022 to 2026 and development work for any future iteration of a national strategy.

Strategic communications

On behalf of all partners within the Blueprint, Welsh Government has led on the development of a **VAWDASV Communications and Engagement Toolkit** which sets out how progress of the National Partnership Board and its constituent workstreams will be communicated to stakeholders. The Board was presented in January with a draft outline of the toolkit, which included contributions from Policing in Wales who undertook a stakeholder engagement analysis for the Blueprint.

A core briefing about the VAWDASV Strategy and Blueprint has been finalised and shared with key stakeholders, along with regular 7-minute progress update which informs our stakeholder on key progress made since the last report was published in October 2023.

Other ways we have promoted the VAWDASV Blueprint is through alignment with the Criminal Justice Board for Wales, cross Government Working, 5 Jurisdictions meeting with the other 4 nations and via the VAWDASV regional networks at a local level.

Details of specific VAWDASV communications campaigns are outlined in relevant sections of this progress report: the Sound campaign is included under Objective 1 and Live Fear Free.

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Part 2: progress against National Strategy objectives

Objective 1

“ Challenge the public attitude to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across the Welsh population through awareness raising and space for public discussion with the aim to decrease its occurrence. ”

The ‘Sound campaign’ was launched in July 2023, with the aim of engaging with men and boys across Wales, in the discussion of how to end VAWDASV. Through the campaign, they received encouragement to ‘sound out’ their relationships, behaviours, and thoughts with each other, to get ‘sound advice’ from sector-informed trusted sources and to embody the ‘sound as’ spirit of those they consider positive role models.

It empowers young men in Wales to champion and celebrate positive masculinity, to hold each other accountable for their actions, support one another to become the best versions of themselves, and, in turn, help to end violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Sound was co-produced with men aged 18 to 34 years through extensive community engagement. It listens to men and supports them to discover their role in finding solutions to gender-based violence, to benefit everyone. Sound focusses on prevention and early intervention, one of the priorities in the current Welsh Government’s VAWDASV National Strategy 2022 to 2026.

The campaign focussed on abusive behaviours, including ‘lovebombing’, ‘gaslighting’ and a cross-sector of society, including young footballers, a boxing

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gym and apprentices from a Welsh college. They spoke openly about their experiences through a series of short videos, podcasts, and events, which were posted on all popular social media platforms, gaming websites and this included signposting links to where they could seek help and support if they were concerned about their own behaviour.

From July 2023 to March 2024, the campaign achieved:

- content impressions (paid and organic): 14,490,797
- opportunities to see (paid, organic, PR and influencer): 105,953,711
- content shares or saves: 1,090
- comments: 4,716
- positive sentiment: 99.3%
- followers on social channels: 3,070 (TikTok, Instagram, YouTube)

In 2024 to 2025 work will continue with sports colleagues to adopt established approaches to addressing VAWDASV through positive approaches in sport.

We are also committed in 2024 to 25 to further develop our understanding of the role men and boys can and should play in addressing harmful behaviours, encouraging challenge and learning through continued awareness raising and discussion. We will continue to consider the role of Sound in our development of prevention policy and how it may underpin other workstream activity as it adapts to different landscapes.

The Gender-based Harassment in All Public Spaces workstream has worked collaboratively to map the work underway in this area. In September 2023 Welsh Government produced a literature review of academic research, campaigns and initiatives underway in Wales, as well as wider afield in the UK and internationally. The review is being used to inform future opportunities and approaches and as the basis for further research. A sub-group of the workstream also met to map the knowledge in this area from workstream members.

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ACE Hub Wales has committed through the workstream to further expand and analyse the Welsh Government literature review in 2024 to 2025.

In February 2024, the seminar 'Preventing Violence: Working with Men and Boys' was held with Professor Michael Flood, a highly regarded researcher on men and masculinities, gender, and violence prevention, leading into the wider work in primary prevention, preventing harm before it occurs in our communities.

The Workplace harassment workstream held an online practice sharing event on workplace sexual harassment for public sector organisations in May 2023. This event was organised through the workstream and provided a valuable opportunity for organisations to learn from each other's experiences, including challenges and good practise in addressing workplace sexual harassment.

The workstream has actively engaged with organisations, leaders and survivors to gather diverse insights that have shaped decision making and strategic direction. Following feedback from the practice sharing event and additional input from stakeholders, the workstream decided to prioritise a series of in-person conferences across Wales. These conferences are being organised in collaboration with social partners and aim to provide Wales' public sector leaders with the knowledge and tools to create safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces, while also providing robust support for victims, survivors, and whistleblowers. The conferences will align to the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 which will come into force in October 2024, having received Royal Assent in October 2023. The legislation amends the provisions in the 2010 Equality Act 2010 to better protect employees from workplace harassment and sexual harassment, shifting the focus from 'redress' to 'prevention'. The conferences will take place over the 2024 to 2025 reporting period.

In March 2024, Welsh Government's Race Disparity Unit commissioned research on behalf of the Workplace harassment workstream to explore Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women's lived experiences of workplace sexual

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harassment in Wales. Insights will be brought together into a final report in December 2024 that will be used to inform actions within the VAWDASV Blueprint Workplace Harassment workstream, the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and Welsh Government's Programme for Social Partnership and Fair Work.

Objective 2

“ Increase awareness in children, young people and adults of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and empowering them to positive personal choices. ”

In September 2022, compulsory relationships and sexuality education (RSE) commenced its rollout across Wales. **The RSE code** contains mandatory requirements (the legal basis) of the Curriculum for Wales framework. RSE content must now include relationships and identity, sexual health and well-being, and empowerment, safety and respect. Violence and health relationships form part of the RSE content.

The empowerment, safety and respect strand of the curriculum focuses on learner's rights to safety, how to seek information, help and support, and how to advocate for respect. For learners aged 11 plus, this includes recognising harmful, abusive or coercive behaviour in personal relationships including control, violence and sexual violence and how to respond and seek help for self and others. This includes all forms of violence based on sex, gender and sexuality. The VAWDASV team continued to fund Stori's Spectrum programme to deliver RSE training across schools for teachers, faculty and students.

Key Spectrum achievements 2023 to 2024

- The project engaged 30,439 children to help them gain an increased

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knowledge, awareness and understanding of VAWDASV issues.

- 124 school staff were trained to support schools to embed a whole school approach to healthy relationships.
- A new Key Stage 4 appropriate lesson was developed with a focus on harassment and stalking.
- “Ted’s Summer Camp” book has been developed and printed to be delivered as part of the foundation phase sessions. Spectrum have now written 3 books in total to ensure Welsh language provision which are both bilingual and age appropriate with key messages reinforced throughout.

During 2023 to 2024, the Children and young people’s (CYP) needs workstream established strong cross-governmental links with the education and curriculum teams, alongside safeguarding and digital resilience, reflecting the whole-system approach to preventing and tackling VAWDASV.

Further demonstrating a partnership approach, the team engaged with the Violence Prevention Unit on their new shared **Framework** for Preventing Violence against Children and Young People to ensure alignment and integration, including a presentation on the perspectives of children and young people from the Violence Prevention Unit.

As outlined in detail at Objective 1, the Sound campaign engaged directly with men and boys in an important campaign, creating empowering and positive discussion on men and boys roles in delivering a Wales without VAWDASV.

Cross-governmental agreement was established that the CYP workstream would be the accountability mechanism for the Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment Action Plan, with a view that the workstream would review, at a minimum annually, progress made against this plan.

VAWDASV and curriculum teams will continue to engage in 2024 to 2025 to consider how the whole-system approach to early intervention through increasing awareness in children and young people could best be delivered

across Wales.

Objective 3

“ Increase the focus on holding those who commit abuse to account and supporting those who may carry out abusive or violent behaviour to change their behaviour and avoid offending. ”

In 2023 to 2024 the Welsh Government committed to co-funding the roll-out of an intervention, aimed at those who pose a low risk of domestic abuse, for first time offenders, who were eligible for a Police Caution with a condition to attend a two-session intervention to reduce the risk of it re-occurring in the future. Both South Wales Police and Gwent Police began this process in 2023 to 2024 with North Wales Police and Dyfed Powys committing to evaluating the necessity and viability in readiness for 2024 to 2025.

The Welsh Government plan to continue to support the roll-out of this intervention across all Police Force areas in Wales in 2024 to 2025, whilst gathering data and evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention alongside Policing colleagues. In 2024, there will be a significant shift in charging decision and cautioning eligibility which will move from the Crown Prosecution Service to individual forces, which hopes to bring about an increase in the use of conditional cautioning.

Gwent Police and South Wales Police joined together to launch a pilot ‘TABW’ which creates additional support and advice for victims of either serving or ex-police officers. Welsh Government have been part of the Steering Group for this Service including developing the Theory of Change and Terms of Reference.

In 2024 to 2025, the Welsh Government made a financial commitment to co-funding the role of a DRIVE worker to work with the perpetrator of the alleged

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police abuse, which supports the work undertaken with victims, contribute to risk assessments and risk management and signpost the individual to relevant support services.

The Welsh Government are a core member of the 'People who offend' taskforce which is governed by the Criminal Justice Board (CJB) in Wales. This provides an interface between the work of the VAWDASV Blueprint Tackling Perpetration Workstream and the CJB, which prevents duplication of work and clearly identified roles and responsibilities in respect of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Through the VAWDASV Blueprint Tackling Perpetration Workstream, and as part of the high-level action plan outlined in 2023, an all-Wales survey was launched in December 2023 and ended in February 2024, which sought to gather information in relation to all currently available perpetrator interventions. This included the provider details, eligibility criteria, behaviour focus, accreditation status and other key areas. The purpose of the survey was multi-functional, aiming to: create a directory of services for practitioners; to identify gaps in existing delivery; to highlight these gaps to the National Partnership Board, and to engage in meaningful discussions with regions to address these issues.

Following the analysis of the survey findings, a report will be presented to the VAWDASV National Partnership Board with a full list of recommendations to be considered and undertaken.

The Tackling Perpetration survey will form a report detailing its findings and will aim to produce a directory of Interventions available across Wales, accessible by practitioners.

Supporting this activity and the desire to better understand the efficacy of behaviour change interventions we will develop a positional statement on efficacy and its standing with developing services and commissioning

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arrangements under a whole system approach.

Through our active engagement with academics and specialist services (for example, Professor Michael Flood, ShelsNotYourRehab, Plan International) we have been actively developing our understanding of the behavioural insights around positive masculinity, healthy relationships and the active role men and boys can play in reducing all forms of VAWDASV.

This insight is invaluable in developing a continued forward approach and placing primary prevention at the heart of our communities. This insight offers not only value to the Tackling Perpetration workstream but is applicable across other workstream activity and the landscapes in which they operate. We will continue in 2024 to 2025 to drive the conversation on challenging the behaviours of men and boys in the primary prevention space and further develop our understanding of the levers, services and mechanisms that can reduce harmful attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence and abuse; using Sound as our platform.

Objective 4

“ Make early intervention and prevention a priority. ”

The prioritisation of early intervention and prevention is embedded across our VAWDASV National strategy and Blueprint workstreams. The strategy commits to maintaining a focus on survivor support and services, whilst at the same time shifting from symptom to cause through a public health approach. We supported the conclusions of the Equality and Social Justice Committee’s report published in January 2024 on [How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence](#) that a public health approach is needed to tackle the causes as well as the effects of gender-based violence. The long-lasting impacts for victims of abuse are significant and

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affect all aspects of their lives. We also welcome the publication of the Violence Prevention Unit's 'A Shared Framework for Preventing Violence among Children and Young People' in 2023 and will seek to continue to test the principles a public health approach and implement behaviours.

Specific preventative action across the workstreams includes the launch Phase 1 of our 'Sound' campaign in the summer of 2023. As outlined under objective 1, the campaign engaged with men and boys between the ages of 18 to 34 across Wales to play a part in supporting early intervention and prevention of violence amongst women and girls.

Phase 1 of the Sound campaign has been such a success that a second campaign, including a documentary produced by BBC Wales, is due for launch in the summer of 2024. This will again focus on specific behaviours and encourage more reflective discussions amongst men and boys as to how they can play their role in addressing violence against women and girls. We will also evaluate the Sound campaign to reflect and learn from our approach, and develop opportunities for partnerships in supporting primary prevention approaches in more community settings.

During 2023 to 2024, the Lead the Change: Bystander Intervention training completed the initiation phase of the pilot, including recruitment and training of trainers and began the early phases of delivering training in different formats to different cohorts. This is a 3-year pilot funded by the Welsh Government to run until March 2026. Kindling Transformative Interventions are working with Plan International UK and Beyond Equality to pilot free active bystander training to organisations, community groups, sports teams, education settings and workplaces in Wales from 2024 to 2026. An evaluation of the pilot will be produced as part of this project at its completion.

We were closely involved in the passage of the Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Bill development with the UK Government. This will create a new offence under the Public Order Act for those who cause intentional

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harassment, alarm or distress to a person in public where the behaviour is done because of that person's sex. This will largely target public sexual harassment of women and girls and ensure there is a clear message that this behaviour will not be accepted. Through completion of a Legislative Consent Memorandum, the offence will also apply to Wales. A Memorandum of Understanding with UK Government agrees that the commencement of the new offence will be set between Welsh and UK Ministers.

As outlined in detail under Objective 2, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) continues to be rolled out as mandatory across Welsh schools from 3 years of age up. The curriculum outlines age-appropriate opportunities to teach children what healthy relationships looks like, including themes around respect, intimate partner relationships and how to access help. The VAWDASV team continued to fund Stori Cymru's Spectrum project in 2023 to 2024 which provides children, parents and school professionals with healthy relationships training and education.

Objective 5

“ Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors. ”

The National Training Framework (NTF) is one of the key mechanisms for delivering the Act. Victims and survivors of VAWDASV will interact with a range of public services including housing and healthcare and it is important to establish proper pathways for support and to embed understanding of gender-based violence within all relevant authorities in Wales.

Relevant authorities (as outlined in the Act) are required to take reasonable steps to train their staff to meet the requirements of the NTF and to report on the progress by submitting an annual report to the Welsh Government following the

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end of each financial year. We will write out to leaders of the relevant authorities to notify them of the progress that has been made in their areas and to remind them of their legal obligations in relation to the NTF in the autumn. It is encouraging to see that there continues to be a focus on the planning and implementation of the NTF across Wales.

Between 1 March 2023 and 31 March 2024, over 55,000 professionals in Wales have accessed training through the National Training Framework which means they are more knowledgeable, more aware and more confident to respond to those experiencing VAWDASV.

Review of the National Training Framework

In the last progress report, the Welsh Government made a commitment to undertake a review of the National Training Framework and associated **Statutory Guidance** published in 2016. This work is in progress and officials have undertaken initial engagement sessions focused primarily on part 1 of the statutory guidance on local training plans, local training needs analysis and the annual report with stakeholders to gather insights and feedback to update and improve the framework.

We would like to thank all stakeholders who contributed valuable perspectives during the initial engagement process. The feedback received will play a crucial role in shaping the direction of the review and ensuring that the revised framework is more responsive, effective, and tailored to the current landscape of domestic abuse and sexual violence prevention.

Moving forward, we will develop proposals for revising the National Training Framework. This work will be carried out in collaboration with key stakeholders, ensuring that the updated framework aligns with the needs of those who use it and the wider objectives of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act.

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The next steps will include further consultation to refine the statutory element of the guidance that underpins the framework. Following this, we will work with stakeholders on the second part of the review focusing on the content of the framework.

Alongside this, we will continue to work with relevant authorities to increase the percentage of the workforce completing basic awareness training. We will continue to engage with relevant authorities as work progresses on the review of the NTF with an aim to issue revised guidance by the end of the financial year.

The Welsh Government remains committed to preventing and responding to domestic abuse and sexual violence, and this review is an important step in strengthening the support available to both victims and those working to protect them.

The Welsh Government VAWDASV Education Toolkit was originally published in 2016 to provide primary, secondary and further education providers with a range of best practice materials to use within education settings. This will be reviewed and updated where appropriate in 2025 to ensure that the most appropriate resources are made available for teachers and school faculty staff. This will be done through the children and young people's needs blueprint workstream in partnership with a range of colleagues across Welsh Government, public sector, regional teams and specialist sector partners.

Objective 6

“ Provide all victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs-led, strength-based, inter-sectional and responsive services across Wales. ”

We are taking this work forward primarily through the Sustainable Whole System

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Approach Workstream of the VAWDASV Blueprint.

The Sustainable Whole System Approach Workstream has a working group that reports directly to the project board and is made up of key stakeholders from across the sector and is chaired by one of the Welsh Government's National Advisers.

The working group meets quarterly and steers the workstream through a detailed delivery plan. The overarching objective is to establish a clear framework of delivery, supported by robust guidance, to improve the link between targeted, evidence-based needs assessments, and strategic planning and delivery to ensure VAWDASV services are delivered efficiently and effectively and meet the needs of the people of Wales.

Furthermore, the Children and Young People's (CYP) Needs workstream commissioned a piece of work to refine the baseline information available regarding support and care pathways for CYP in Wales. This included a literature review to demonstrate existing research and papers, alongside a report providing an overview of existing resource in Wales with recommendations for the Blueprint. The report and recommendations are due to be finalised in early 2024 to 2025.

In February 2024 we launched an internet-based survey which helped to gather evidence directly from stakeholders on the effectiveness of the current framework, how the duties outlined in the VAWDASV Act are being delivered, and how partners are working collaboratively across the sector to deliver the requirements set out in the VAWDASV Policy and the Blueprint.

A report, summarising the findings of this survey, together with clear recommendations for the next stage of delivery will be presented to the Working Group the autumn.

This is the beginning of this process. A great deal of additional work is needed to

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establish an improved framework and to develop the guidance required to support the network of stakeholders and providers across Wales.

The CYP workstream is focusing on the voice of CYP by commissioning a mapping exercise of existing CYP provision in Wales, alongside a facilitated approach to developing a framework for engaging CYP through the Blueprint.

Part 3: broader engagement

Equalities, intersectionality and vulnerable groups

We cannot truly deliver the change we want to see without addressing intersectionality and the ways in which characteristics such as age, race, disability status, sexuality, socio-economic status and wider can present additional needs, barriers and challenges to those experiencing VAWDASV.

The VAWDASV Blueprint is committed to the development and embedding of an intersectionality framework. The framework will identify and address the underlying structural causes in which people experience barriers, elevate marginalised voices, provide a benchmark for continuous learning and development and make recommendations to create a response based on equity, non-discrimination and inclusion. This intersectionality framework has been developed and will be piloted with the Blueprint workstreams in 2024 to 2025.

Across government, we contribute to and represent the interests of VAWDASV to various equalities action plans, including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan and the Disabilities Taskforce.

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Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities

Bawso continued to be funded by the Welsh Government in 2023 to 2024, ensuring a national by-and-for service for black, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Wales. With support from the VAWDASV revenue grant, Bawso has shone a light on the support available for victims of abuse through organising events on International Women's Day and International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation. Bawso continue to offer a North Wales outreach services to ensure a national approach to delivery, as well as children's projects across Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

Across the year, Bawso supported 403 women and 94 children through temporary specialist accommodation. 2,906 clients were provided advice and advocacy services after being affected by VAWDASV, and 420 people attended their commemorative events throughout the year.

No Recourse to Public Funding

No recourse to public funding (NRPF) conditions create additional, complex barriers for victims of domestic abuse or sexual violence.

In February 2022, Bawso provided the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip a paper outlining the limitations of the Home Office Support for Migrant Victim (SMV) scheme and provided examples of where the funding did not go far enough to support victims of abuse with NRPF in Wales. Limitations included a lack of sufficient accommodation, subsistence funding was too short lived in relation to the drawn-out asylum process, as well as a lack of understanding in terms of statutory roles of other agencies across Wales such as social services. The timing was appropriate, as the ESJ committee had issued its report into the needs of migrant women who had experienced gender-based violence.

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The Minister agreed we would provide pilot funding for 2023 to 2024 to ‘top-up’ the SMV scheme in Wales. Whilst this would not be a perfect solution, it would ensure Bawso could provide those individuals who were accessing the SMV scheme with additional funding, for longer, to ensure their safety and continued support through the complex asylum system. It was agreed Bawso would be granted funding to deliver against these expectations for 2023 to 2024.

The parameters of the fund were to ensure daily subsistence rates were increased to ensure a victim and her children had money for food and other essentials, accommodation costs could be covered for an extended period of time, and other costs could be covered such as transport, legal aid and other requirements.

Bawso were able to support 90 individuals by topping up their SMV fund with the Welsh Government pilot funding, which is 15 more than intended in the delivery plan.

The Welsh Government committed to continue to fund Bawso to deliver the ‘top up’ pilot in 2024 to 2025 to continue ensuring that migrant victims in Wales with no recourse to public funds are offered additional support whilst navigating the complex immigration landscape. Ongoing analysis is taking place to identify the most appropriate and sustainable route of supporting people moving forwards.

Harmful practices

The Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Leadership Group continued to meet throughout 2023 to 2024. The leadership consists of professionals from across the public and specialist sector, although given capacity issues across the sector, attendance has been limited from some partner organisations.

Key topics covered included a lack of consistency in data collection across Wales (and the UK) as well as awareness and understanding of HBA throughout

the professional sector, leading to risk not being adequately managed, nor suitable support pathways being instigated. It is imperative that ownership for these issues is agreed by all participants moving forwards to ensure that real change can be implemented. The Leadership Group drafted a new, more focused delivery plan in 2023 to 2024 to ensure that this ownership could be realised through specific and achievable action, encouraging contribution from across the public and specialist sector to prevent and tackle honour-based abuse.

The Leadership Group has engaged with an academic who is also focusing on data collection regarding HBA across the UK and further progress is expected in 2024 to 2025.

Older persons

Members of the Older People's Needs workstream focused on understanding and identifying gaps in service provision for older people. This was done by undertaking a mapping exercise of the existing services available to older people across Wales, both general and bespoke, victims and perpetrator.

From this map, 2 further pieces of work were instigated, 1 focusing on survivor voice, and the other focusing on engaging the services to learn more about how to ensure accessibility for older people.

Both projects commenced in 2023 to 2024 with engagement taking place with older people, focusing on their experiences regarding accessing the services available. Simultaneously, towards the end of 2023 to 2024, the workstream commenced a series of engagement with the services themselves started to identify best practice regarding accessibility for older people. Both projects are due to complete in 2024 to 2025.

LGBTQ+ communities

VAWDASV consistently features within the Welsh Government's LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, with specific actions to ensure that work undertaken within the VAWDASV team aligns to the broader goals of Welsh Government in ensuring LGBTQ+ communities are safe and healthy. These actions include: a focus on sustainable, long-term funding for specialist VAWDASV services; ensuring VAWDASV services are inclusive; undertaking further research to understand the intersectional needs of LGBTQ+ communities from ethnic minorities and those with disabilities, alongside better data collection.

The Whole System Approach within the Blueprint has a focus on sustainable commissioning, ensuring a collaborative approach to commissioning to reduce duplication and target support and intervention where it is needed the most. This will ensure that, through collective action, we are able to respond to emerging issues. Intersectionality and equality underpins all policy development to ensure that decisions made regarding sustainable whole system approaches consider the needs of all potential victims and survivors in Wales, including the LGBTQ+ community.

Disability

The VAWDASV team ensured representation on the Disability Taskforce, in particular on the Access to Justice and Children and Young People's workstreams to ensure that the needs of disabled victims and survivors who have experienced abuse or violence were taken into account. The workstreams were delivered in a co-productive approach with representation from disabled persons organisations, third sector, criminal justice and cross-governmental policy leads. At the end of 2023 to 2024, draft recommendations from the Access to Justice workstream were finalised under the VAWDASV theme, focusing on survivor voice, intersectional data and raising awareness. Full

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recommendations are due to be shared at the beginning of 2024 to 2025.

The Live Fear Free Helpline implemented Sign Live in 2023 to ensure that British Sign Language (BSL) users had an additional route to access services from the Helpline. Whilst text, email and live chat were already alternative routes to speak to a helpline advocate, it is recognised that the reading and comprehension age of BSL signers is 8 years old, meaning that access to BSL interpretation can help ensure better understanding and access to information advice and guidance.

Engagement with UK Government and Europe

The Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Act (2023)

During 2023, the VAWDASV policy team formed part of a cross-governmental group within Welsh Government who engaged with Home Office colleagues during the passage of the Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Bill, which became an Act in September 2023.

The Protection from Sex-based Harassment in Public Act (2023) makes provision to address 'intentional harassment, alarm or distress to a person in public where the behaviour is done because of that person's sex, or perceived sex'. It creates a new offence, and provides tougher sentencing for offenders that harass, alarm or cause distress due to the perceived sex of the victim-survivor, and also adds Section 4A to the Public Order Act 1986, allowing for tougher sentences for perpetrators who intentionally harass another person in a public place due to their sex, or perceived sex. The Act carries a maximum prison sentence of 2-years for the offence of public harassment.

A Memorandum of Understanding for this Act was signed on 1 June 2023 between the Secretary of State for the Home Department and Welsh Ministers

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committing to collaborate and consult on the commencement date and guidance to relevant authorities was signed 1 June 2023. The Senedd subsequently passed a Legislative Consent Motion on 13 June 2023 to give consent for this offence to also apply to Wales. Following Royal Assent in September 2023, we have continued to engage with the UK government in preparation for the implementation of the Act in late 2024.

Victims and Prisoners Act 2024

During 2023 to 2024, the VAWDASV policy team formed part of a cross-governmental group within Welsh Government who engaged with Ministry of Justice colleagues during the passage of the Victims and Prisoners Bill, which became an Act in April 2024.

The Victims and Prisoners Act (2024) makes provision about victims of criminal conduct and others affected by criminal conduct; about the appointment and functions of advocates for victims of major incidents; about the release of prisoners; about the membership and functions of the Parole Board; to prohibit certain prisoners from forming a marriage or civil partnership; and for connected purposes.

During 2023 to 2024, Welsh Government engaged regularly regarding a number of provisions within the Bill to understand the policy, strategic, legal and constitutional practicalities of the Bill passage, with a focus on the impact on Wales. For the VAWDASV team, particular attention was drawn to Clause 15 (now Section 16 of the Act) which related to guidance regarding independent advisors for example Independent Sexual Violence Adviser VAs and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates as well as a focus on the proposed duty to collaborate (now section 13 of the Act).

The Policy team continues to engage with wider policy colleagues in the Welsh Government, MOJ and other partners in the VAWDASV sector regarding the

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impact of the Act in Wales.

Council of Europe evaluation on the convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

In January 2024, GREVIO, the expert body evaluating the implementation of the Istanbul Convention visited the four UK nations to discuss progress in this area. In Wales, this meant a visit to Cardiff to engage with policy and strategy leads, police, CAFCASS Cymru, regional VAWDASV advisors and the third sector. GREVIO also met with the Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt.

To ensure that Wales could demonstrate the cross-sector work that had taken place to ratify the convention, two full days of meetings took place, showcasing progress made in areas such as national strategies, regional delivery, intersectionality, supporting migrant victims, sustainable funding of Non-Governmental Organisations and regional partnerships. It provided a helpful platform to demonstrate to cross-governmental work taking place to shape policy and deliver better systems to support those at risk of, and those who have experienced abuse and violence in Wales. The GREVIO report is due before the end of 2024.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls visit

In February 2024, a special rapporteur on violence against women and girls for the UN visited Wales as part of a four-nation tour. The special rapporteur met with policy and strategy leads, Policing in Wales and those with lived experience to partake in a roundtable, presenting progress across the VAWDASV sector in Wales. The rapporteur also met with the third sector.

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The visit provided an opportunity for the then Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt, to reinforce the commitment to tackling VAWDASV that exists in Wales, sharing updates on our Welsh Government Programme for Government and national VAWDASV strategy. The rapporteur showed particular interest in data challenges, supporting those with intersectional needs, online harms and misogyny and an ask for better collaboration between governments and third sector organisations.

A report is anticipated to be published later this year.

Conclusions and future focus

Significant progress has been made in 2023 to 2024 through the continued embedding of the 6VAWDASV Blueprint workstreams and delivery of the 6 National Strategy objectives. The Blueprint has given us an opportunity to formalise and embed our principles of partnership and working collaboratively to eliminate gender-based violence and abuse. We have continued to make progress in tackling violence against women and girls, domestic abuse and sexual violence in 2023 to 2024; however, it is clear much remains to be done. We supported the conclusions of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's report on [How we must all play our part: a public health approach to halting the epidemic in gender-based violence](#) that a public approach is needed to tackle the causes as well as the effects of gender-based violence.

Only by instilling a collective sense of effort towards achieving our objectives can we make a real change. It will take all of us in society to tackle violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Our focus in 2024 to 2025 will be to continue to promote this cross-government approach embedded in the Blueprint and to prioritise early intervention and prevention. We will also seek to ensure more sustainable funding for specialist services to prevent, protect and support victims and survivors, and that the voice of survivors continues to shape

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our policy and interventions.

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